

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

2615 S. GRAND AVE., SUITE 100
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90007



United We Stand



Joseph N. Smith
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, September 12, 2012

Present:

Absent:

Commissioners

Bob Archuleta, Chair
Carvel Gay, Vice Chair
Fred Flores
Stephanie Stone

Commissioners

Dave Culmer
Steve Rosmarin
Ramon Rodriguez

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Tatiana Rosas, Executive Secretary

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Bob Archuleta called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m., and welcomed everyone for attending. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Glen Roosevelt, Corporal (Ret.), U.S. Marine Corps, Commander of the Dept. of California and Pacific, and Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. Due to a lack of a quorum, only four Commissioners present; the approval of minutes was postponed.

Roll Call

As noted above.

Chairman's Report

Chair Archuleta stated that the nation came together on September 11th (9/11). We were attacked and as a nation we fell to our knees not on our backs, but we have recovered on this the 11th anniversary. The memorial was very touching and moving; the respondents, survivors, and families, all came together to honor those that sacrificed their lives that day. Across the country all veterans and the nation came together.

Chair Archuleta stated that the Supervisors will be contacted and urged to fill the vacancies on the Commission. The Commission represents the veterans through out Los Angeles County. "We are the eyes and ears of the Board of Supervisors. We are here to give our veterans a better sense of belonging. There are so many veterans that return and feel lost. We need to make them feel that the County and nation is with them." He acknowledged the Sheriff Department he informed that every employee that returned from being deployed had their job waiting for them.

Comments from Audience (three minutes each)

173rd Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation

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Raymond Ramirez, Director, 173rd Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation, stated the Memorial is dedicated to all Sky Soldiers who have served or will serve in the 173rd Airborne Brigade. It stands as a tribute to those Sky Soldiers who fell in combat.

The 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team ("Sky Soldiers") is an airborne infantry brigade combat team of the United States Army based in Vicenza, Italy. It is the United States European Command's conventional airborne strategic response force for Europe.

Activated in 1915, as the 173rd Infantry Brigade, the unit saw service in World War I, but is best known for its actions during the Vietnam War. The brigade was the first major United States Army ground formation deployed in Vietnam, serving there May 1965–1971 and losing almost 1,800 soldiers. Noted for its roles in Operation Hump and Operation Junction City, the 173rd is best known for the Battle of Dak To, where it suffered heavy casualties in close combat with North Vietnamese forces. Brigade members received over 7,700 decorations, including more than 6,000 Purple Hearts. The brigade returned to the United States, where it was deactivated in 1972. Since its reactivation in 2000, the brigade served four tours in the Middle East in support of the War on Terror. The 173rd participated in the initial invasion of Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, and had three tours in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2005–2006, 2007–2008 and 2009–2010. The brigade returned from its most recent deployment in eastern Afghanistan in December 2010.

On June 1, 2010, the 173rd Airborne Brigade National Memorial was dedicated on the grounds of the National Infantry Museum and Soldier Center in Columbus, GA, next to Fort Benning, GA, "the home of the Airborne." A year later on June 11, 2011, an "Honors Ceremony" was conducted at the 173rd National Memorial and 1 fallen brother from Vietnam was also honored. Former SSG Salvatore A. Giounta was honored on the granite panel that honors the "Sky Soldier" heroes who received the Medal of Honor.

A 50th Anniversary Celebration and Reading of the Names is being scheduled for Thursday, March 21, 2012 through Sunday, March 24, 2012 at the 173rd Airborne Brigade National Memorial in Columbus, GA.

Mr. Ramirez distributed fact sheet on the history of the 173rd Airborne Brigade and the 2012 Mid-Year Report of the 173rd Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation.

American Legion Los Angeles Post 381

Peter Bernard, Police Post 381, and a member of the American Legion. Mr. Bernard stated he's been to previous Commission meetings requesting to be allowed in Bob Hope Patriotic Hall to no avail. He doesn't understand how US VETS was given a tour of the building when his post was a former tenant and not given the same privilege. He informed that he had received a questionnaire from the County asking about operational and space needs which he has returned.

Some of the things the post does;

- Has a class at the police academy and provide information on benefits to the new cadets.
- They've sent 32 kids to Boys State in June, 2012.
- Forming a post for the USS Iowa.

Mr. Bernard stated that as the second tenant for many years at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall, he is asking the Commission for help in being allowed to tour the building. Chair Archuleta responded that he would be added to the list for a tour of Bob Hope Patriotic Hall as soon as that can be arranged.

Congresswoman Gail Napolitano

Hector F. Elizalde, Veterans/Military Liaison for Congresswoman Gail Napolitano stated he there was an LA Veterans Collaborative Meeting this morning. The collaborative is part of the Governor's Operation Welcome Home Initiative. The idea behind the collaborative is to identify and document all the organizations that have services that help veterans including federal, city, county, profit, non-profit and faith based organizations.

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On September 18, 2012 at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology in downtown Los Angeles there will be a west coast Congressional Field Hearing with lead co-sponsor of the law, Congresswoman Gail Napolitano and former Representative Patrick J. Kennedy along with other officials and community partners to call for full enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Law of 2008. Mental health illnesses should be treated no differently than any physical illness in the body. The days of stigmatizing mental illness, of turning our backs on those who need our help, of walking away from this problem, are over. We know that being our own health advocate is paramount to ensuring we receive the best care available. Please attend the hearing if you like to address our congressional leaders on this subject. Mr. Elizalde stated he would send a flyer to the secretary for her distribution to the Commission and veteran organizations.

VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare Center – Ralph Tillman

Charles Green, Outreach Coordinator, Community Relations Manager, reported on the upcoming “Carmageddon II.” Carmageddon will be returning to Los Angeles County, September 29-30, so that workers can finish demolishing the Mulholland Bridge. Closure Areas:

- NB 405 will be closed from I-10 to US 101
- SB 405 will be closed from US 101 to Getty Center ramps
- Timeline for September 28th (day before closure):
- 7pm - All on and off-ramps on NB/SB 405 will begin to close
- 10pm - NB/SB 405 lanes will begin to close
- Midnight - The NB/SB 405 will be completely closed

There was a media advisory sent out and it's also posted on the website.

Mr. Green distributed a flyer on a free concert for veterans and their families sponsored by the Greater Los Angeles Fisher House Foundation, “A Day for Heroes” on Saturday, November 10th, 2012. The concert will feature the group America, who sang “Horse with no Name.” For more information, please visit www.greaterlafisherhouse.org or call (310) 278-3711 extension 42441. Last year, they had a grassroots group from the 1960s. Commissioner Stone asked where does the money go and Mr. Green responded that he would take that question back to administration and have a response at next month's meeting.

We've been doing outreach at the Edwards Air Force Base by sending mobile VA teams. At the National Guards Base we took physicians, nurses and did enrollments. During the summer we had open house events and job fairs with employers on sight offering jobs to veterans.

Commissioner Stone asked how many veterans have signed up at the job fair. Mr. Green responded that 2,000 veterans attended and 600 enrolled and 100 veterans received physicals.

Commissioner Stone inquired about the 63rd Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program Event at the Bonaventure Hotel on September 14-16, 2012. Mr. Green stated that most veterans are coming from Texas and Arkansas but Los Angeles is the hub. This event is being sponsored by the Department of Defense (DoD). All expenses are being paid by DoD and vendors at the event are picked and approved by DoD. About 2,000 veterans are expected to attend.

Update on Refurbishment of Bob Hope Patriotic Hall

Bill Gelpi, Principal Facilities Project Manager, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, stated the progress on the building and showed a power point presentation of the work being done inside Bob Hope Patriotic Hall:

- All systems are working properly; air, heating, lighting systems and all are monitored by a computer.
- The auditorium seating is still in place.

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- The lower level dining area is totally modernized, WiFi and has the ability for video conference.
- In the Lincoln Room the floor is being finished; the bleachers still have to be put in. There is a 14ft. screen and it has the ability to do a power point presentation.
- In the Nimitz Room the wainscot still needs to be refurbished.
- The 10th Floor Gym the floor has also been reconditioned to mitigate noise.

Mr. Gelpi stated that there is still a lot of testing that needs to be done throughout the building.

Commissioner Stone inquired about all the materials that were in the building and will it also be going back? And Mr. Gelpi responded that yes, unless MVA and/or the historian deem it be kept in storage.

Mr. Peter Bernard asked how big is the stage in the auditorium and Mr. Gelpi answered it is very big and has a 45ft. screen and full audio capability.

Mr. Jay Morales inquired about the 6th floor and asked Bill Gelpi that he had avoided an update on the Roosevelt Room. Mr. Gelpi responded that most even number floors look identical. He also stated that most rooms required egress or a passage through.

Commissioner Stone stated that in regards to the murals commissioned for the hall the veteran community was informed prior to the Commission. Mr. Gelpi stated the murals were commissioned by the Art Commission and he had nothing to do with that process.

Bob Hope Patriotic Hall Space Allocation Process – Jan Takata

Jan Takata, Capitol Projects/Debt Management Division, Chief Executive Office, stated that access to the building has been restricted because the final touches are being put on the floor, the lacquer and glue in the lobby, and there are cables still running. It's not yet safe to walk around.

The space allocation process is still on-going they have met with the tenants and stakeholders and have sent out space program questionnaires to them. The questionnaire, the individual and group meetings will assist us in developing a space allocation plan that to the extent possible, meets with the Board of Supervisors' commitment to commemorate the service of our nation's military personnel and accommodate the space request of your organization. The final space plan will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for consideration and approval in December, 2012. We are still collecting questionnaires and will be putting together a matrix of all the requests the veteran organizations have identified that they need. Mr. Takata passed out a list of all the veteran organizations that was sent a questionnaire.

Mr. Takata also stated that the odd number floors that Mr. Bill Gelpi didn't show pictures of are housing the air handler, water pumps, etc. He explained that because of the historical aspect of the building we have lost space primarily storage space. The record component of space is the plan use and half the space, 50% was used for non-veteran activities, 20% was used by Military and Veterans Affairs and the other 30% for veteran activities. When the Board approved the refurbishment it was with the understanding that the building will provide services to veterans. We need to take out or lower the 50% of non-veteran activities.

Mr. Takata explained that social services, children and senior services, mental health and support services for veterans will be represented and there will be a non-profit program. He stated that they have worked with US VETS in terms of space for direct services and there may still be more work to be done, but the issue of conflict of interest is being addressed. There will be a Request for Qualification (RFQ) that will be shared before it's released and the County, with Gen. Peter Gravett, Stephanie Stone and Ruth Wong will evaluate and the final decision will be made by the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Takata stated there will be second stakeholders meeting in October to present preliminary space plan based upon stakeholder input from September. A third stakeholders meeting will take place in November to present revised space plan that reflects stakeholder input from October. Lastly, he reiterated that in December, 2012 the final space plan will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for their consideration and approval.

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Commissioner Stone inquired about the storing of General Patton's uniform.

Mr. Takata stated that the biggest challenge is storage issues. At the stakeholders meetings and individual meetings storage space was brought up. The Natural History Museum and other experts will determine what an artifact is, what is worth saving and how to store it. Mr. Glen L. Roosevelt, USMC 1961-1967, Member of the American Legion, and Military & Veterans Affairs Volunteer, stated that the County had chosen a storage place that Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) would use. Mr. Roosevelt also pointed out that General Patton's uniform is not an authentic uniform.

Mr. Takata stated that there is a website launched tomorrow that will be updated regularly with information on the progress of construction and development of the space allocation plan. The address is www.bobhopepatriotichall.lacounty.gov.

American Legion

Jay Morales, retired Marine, Vietnam Veteran and Adjutant, American Legion, 17th District, Los Angeles Post No. 8, commended the Commission for their diligence and professionalism. He stated, "It is correct that more than 50% of the usage of the building is by non-profits. Unfortunately, the veteran organizations took no position on this."

Mr. Morales stated that General Patton's uniform may be a replica but they have 361 autographed WW II pictures that were seen on the movie "Flashdance." Post 8 has video taped all their memorabilia and are interested to see what will be returned.

Mr. Morales stated, "This fight to save the building has a purpose, any veteran can tell you that it is not the proper place to treat mental health."

Transportation Foundation of Los Angeles

Tamiko Hirano, Executive Director, Transportation of Los Angeles, Western Region Representative, Department of Defense (DoD) and Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) wanted to update the Commissioner on a County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) meeting she attended this morning. Employment is an issue for veterans and it is difficult to translate military work experience to civilian workforce experience. She showed a chart on how many veterans enrolled in the 18 workforce centers. Ms. Hirano stated the WIB is not doing proper outreach to the veterans.

Chair Archuleta stated that it's frustrating that the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot do proper advertising on television of the services they offer.

Ms. Hirano stated that there will be 100,000 veterans returning in the next year and 60% will be returning to Southern California. "How are we going to serve these people?"

Chair Archuleta stated that we need to work with the homeless veterans because they are not aware of the resources available to them. "We need to get them off the streets."

Mr. Elizalde stated that Vet Hunters work with the homeless and they don't have a budget. The Vet Hunters average two veterans a day and get them off the streets. Congresswoman Napolitano is advocating in Congress on more money for homeless programs.

Election of Commission Officers

Due to a lack of a quorum, only four Commissioners present, the election of Commission Officers is postponed until next month.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report – Colonel Joseph Smith

Chair Archuleta suggested foregoing the reading of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Department Report in lieu of Colonel Joseph N. Smith, Director's absence and accept the report as written.

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Ruth Wong stated she's been assigned temporarily to the department as a Special Assistant to help with the day to day Department operations. Colonel Smith is out due the passing of his sister, we will be sending him a card, but it was requested that there be any donations made to the Wounded Warriors in lieu of flowers.

The Dedication of the Garden of Flags went very well; our own Commissioner Stephanie Stone, the US Navy, Glen Roosevelt all participated. There was a Vietnam era veteran in attendance. She recommended that everyone visit the garden.

Ms. Wong stated the Department has a booth at the Los Angeles County Fair. She also stated that the Department needs additional counselors and she is talking to Human Resources to get their assistance and get employees on extended medical leave to get back to work.

New Business

Commissioner Gay stated that he wanted to commend George Dixon, Military & Veterans Affairs, for a presentation he did in the City of Glendale to Mayor Quintero and the City Council. George Dixon did a great job explaining the benefits available to veterans and what the department of Military & Veterans Affairs offers the veterans and their families.

Item's for Next Month's Agenda

- Election of Commission Officers
- Vet Hunters – Jose Leal
- Los Angeles Regional Office – Dennis Kuewa
- Veterans Home Support Committee – Stephanie Stone and Steve Rosmarin
- Sunset law rules for the Commission to evaluate.
- Commissioner Ramon Rodriguez will invite two Veterans for October's meeting to offer the Invocation and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Flores; stated he was glad to be back and thanked everyone for their patience. He will send information via e-mail on the San Fernando Valley Parade scheduled for 11/11/12.

Commissioner Stone; stated for the good of the order:

- Los Angeles Mayor – 1st Annual Vet Appreciation Event. She sent out a flyer.
- LA City and County WIB are meeting and have formed a sub-committee.
- Goodwill has a breakfast every week; the next one is on 9/20 at the Urban League.
- Working with Glendale on female veterans and doing outreach to women veterans in the community.

Commissioner Gay; stated he had nothing for the good of the order.

Chair Archuleta acknowledged UCLA on the Armed Forces Football game which will take place on Saturday, November 3, 2012. He thanked everyone for their participation on 9/11 events.

Chair Archuleta adjourned meeting at 3:35 p.m.

Tatiana Rosas
Executive Secretary
September 12, 2012

Note: The next Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, October 10, 2012 at 1:30 p.m. in Suite 100 at the Department of Public Social Services site at 2615 S. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA.